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Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3843rd Meeting

Friday, 19 December 1997, 12.30 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Berrocal Soto	(Costa Rica)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Lopes Da Rosa
	Japan	Mr. Owada
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Matuszewski
	Portugal	Mr. Monteiro
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Dahlgren
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Richmond
	United States of America	Mr. Richardson

Agenda

The situation in Croatia

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (S/1997/953 and Add.1)

97-86800 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Croatia

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (S/1997/953/Add.1)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Belgium, Croatia, Germany and Italy, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Simonovic (Croatia) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Reyn (Belgium), Mr. Eitel (Germany) and Mr. Fulci (Italy) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, documents S/1997/953 and Addendum 1. Members of the Council also have before them document S/1997/990, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/1997/913, which contains the text of a letter dated 20 November 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Croatia addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the text of a letter of the same date from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Croatia to the Secretary-General.

The first speaker on my list is the representative of Croatia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Simonovic (Croatia): The United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) mission is about to be terminated, as envisioned two years ago, and with almost all of its objectives fully completed.

This joint success of UNTAES and the Government of Croatia can serve as an example for other present and future peacekeeping endeavours around the world. The conflict in Eastern Slavonia was resolved peacefully and control of previously occupied territory has reverted to the legitimate authorities. The reintegration process included not only administrative aspects, but all important human elements, reflected in, for instance, the Government's reconciliation programme.

An important reason for the success of this mission was the appearance of a credible threat of force in the peace process in 1995. What followed was Croatia's conscious decision to avoid the direct use of this force in the case of Eastern Slavonia, opting instead for the peaceful method of reintegration, with the assistance and support of the international community. Two issues played an important role in our decision: first, the human costs of a military operation would be significant for all sides involved; and secondly, Croatia's firm commitment to long-term peace and stability in the broader area. We had also taken into account that the Serbs who rebelled against Croatia did so due to external factors and that many of them preferred to live in Croatia as loyal citizens, sharing equal rights and duties.

An equally important reason for the success of the mission was the commitment of the international community to work in cooperation with the Government by providing some of its vast resources and knowledge in the area of conflict resolution and by giving UNTAES an active and dynamic mandate. The matrix of success was completed when the Security Council added to the clarity of the mandate by appointing Transitional Administrators with skills in assertive leadership. We commend both General Klein and Ambassador Walker for their superb performance.

The success of UNTAES can be seen in many areas, but we believe that success is best reflected by the following: the documents programme; government spending in the region; the reconciliation programme; public overtures to the residents of the region; and the notable number of returns.

The Croatian Government has issued over 154,000 citizenship certificates in the region. This number exceeds the present population estimates for the region by more than 30,000, which indicates that former rebels now living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina also received documents in the region. Only 888 applications for citizenship were rejected.

The Government has dedicated enormous resources to the region, despite its strict fiscal policy of non-inflationary spending and despite numerous obstacles. For example, it is not receiving any tax revenue from the region; it has had to cope with huge, extraordinary costs related to the care of hundreds of thousands of its own displaced persons and Bosnian refugees; and, finally, it is still incurring extraordinary social costs common to all transition economies. The financial support from the international community has been marginal. Croatia has spent $1.7 billion for the reconstruction of reintegrated territories. Less than 3 per cent has come from the international community, as Mr. Walker pointed out in Geneva yesterday.

In spite of the fact that the wounds inflicted by war were still fresh, the Government adopted a reconciliation programme. The National Council established to implement the reconciliation programme has been very active and productive.

The Government has also made numerous public overtures to the former rebels. High Government officials have been active and visible in assuring the former rebels that, having accepted its citizenship, they have a place in Croatia. The President of Croatia alone has made eight such public appeals over the past two years.

Croatia is also a success story in regard to the return of internally and externally displaced persons to their homes. All together, 28,000 persons formerly affiliated with the rebel/occupying forces have returned: 9,500 from the region and 18,500 from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, 6,000 victims of aggression have returned to the region; a larger return can be expected in the spring.

Croatia welcomes the draft resolution before the Council today. The draft resolution is clear in that the Transitional Administration in the region and the UNTAES mandate will terminate on 15 January. This clarity can only help the reintegration process.

The draft resolution also provides for assistance in the area of police monitoring, as requested by the Croatian Government. Croatia has made this request for monitoring consistent with its policy of openness. Croatia is probably one of the most transparent countries in the world. It has opened its doors to over 2,000 international organizations and over 300 organizations which monitor and report, in one way or another, on human rights in Croatia.

In spite of the many positive elements it contains, we believe that the draft resolution overlooks two important issues. First, it does not give proper focus with respect of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Paragraph 11 calls specifically only on Croatia to cooperate with the Tribunal. Although the draft resolution deals with the region, which was occupied for a period of time by Serbia and Montenegro, whose armed forces were involved in grave war crimes, it fails to mention the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Three Yugoslav army officers have been indicted by the Tribunal for crimes committed in the region, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia refuses to extradite them.

In addition, the draft resolution fails to reflect that the former rebels are reintegrating not only into Croatia, but also into the vibrant Serb community in Croatia. A substantial segment of the Serb community has remained to live in Croatia, sharing the destiny and hardships of all other citizens of Croatia. The former rebels should also look to this group as a bridge for full reintegration into Croatian society and public life.

With the ending of the UNTAES mandate, Croatia ends one important period of its history and begins another. The present period has been characterized by State-building, affirmation of long-denied identity and mere survival. Now we are entering a period of development where quality of life for all its citizens takes centre stage. We will continue to count on the international community for support in this important regard. However, we hope that the character of cooperation can take a new form. For example, in the area of human rights, we hope that the policy of monitoring can be supplemented with concrete technical assistance.

I should like to conclude by expressing once more Croatia's gratitude to the international community, and especially to the men and women of UNTAES, for the positive role it has played in Croatia. We hope that the experience in Croatia can serve as a model for future United Nations operations, and my Government would be pleased to contribute its newly gained knowledge in this regard.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution [S/1997/990] before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): Today we are to take a decision on a draft resolution to establish in Eastern Slavonia a new mission, a United Nations civilian police support group.

We are approaching the expiration of the two-year period provided for under the Basic Agreement and the scheduled conclusion, on 15 January 1998, of the United Nations Transitional Administration in the region (UNTAES). The lessons and experiences of this operation, one of the largest peacekeeping operations of the United Nations in recent years, a successor to the United Nations Protection Force and the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia, will continue to be reviewed and analysed. However, it is already clear that we can talk about the fruitfulness of international efforts in the context of UNTAES only if there is long-term, full and unconditional adherence by the Government of Croatia to the process of genuine reintegration of people and the achievement of a multi-ethnic reconciliation for all citizens.

Russia took an active part in all three United Nations operations in Eastern Slavonia. Our peacekeepers have been serving there since the summer of 1992, and we are sincerely interested in positive results for the international efforts aimed at settling that conflict.

Unfortunately, there are still quite a few sore points which require priority attention and additional efforts before the conclusion of the transition period and beyond. These remaining problems have to do with the return of refugees and displaced persons and include settling the problems of ownership of property, the functioning of local public bodies, the continuing discrimination against and violation of the rights of the Serbian population, doubts about the proper implementation of the amnesty law, problems of trust in the police and other issues. All of this shows that the obligations of the Croatian Government in reintegrating Eastern Slavonia have not yet been fully complied with. We need additional measures, on the basis of the results of the last two months, during which the Government of Croatia has indeed taken a number of serious positive steps.

The continuation of the active involvement of the international community and its help in strengthening the positive dynamics of the reintegration process are of special significance. An important role in this should be played by regional organizations, first and foremost by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We expect a speedy and full deployment in the region of that Organization's long-term mission. We proceed from the premise that the closest coordination and interaction will be established between the United Nations and the OSCE missions.

We believe that it is extremely important to continue the activities of United Nations specialized agencies, particularly those of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

A further increase in the potential of bilateral relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia would be a positive factor.

The continued presence of the United Nations in Eastern Slavonia, which will continue in the form of a civilian police operation after 15 January 1998, will enable us to ensure the sorely needed guarantees for strengthening trust among the local population, especially in a period of mass returns of displaced persons. As set forth in the draft resolution, of which Russia is a sponsor, the parameters for the mandate of the support group retain some continuation of the police component of UNTAES.

Our view of the way to carry out the tasks mandated by the Security Council aimed at the peaceful reintegration of the region is based on the long-term nature of the Basic Agreement and the more than 20 other agreements between UNTAES and the Croatian authorities, which constitute a legal basis for the long-term reintegration process. Compliance by the Government of Croatia — which bears major

responsibility for successful reintegration — with its obligations is a major prerequisite for ensuring that the process of reconciliation and the restoration of trust in the region is irreversible. We are convinced that the Government of Croatia will fully recognize the measure of its responsibility and, with international support, will not allow a process in which so much effort has been invested to be undermined.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): My Government supports this draft resolution to establish a support group of civilian police monitors to continue to monitor the performance of the Croatian police in the Danube region after the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES). This initiative, which Croatia has requested, will help solidify the progress achieved during the two years of UNTAES and will permit a smooth transition between UNTAES and the monitoring efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in the region.

This past Monday, the Transitional Police Force created under UNTAES was fully integrated into the Croatian national police. A professional, capable and unbiased police force and improvements in public security are key to maintaining the secure environment necessary to convince Serbs residing in the region to remain, and to encourage Croats to return. Unfortunately, local confidence in the police remains low.

The presence of United Nations civilian police monitors in the region after 15 January 1998, as is being authorized by the Council today, will help provide needed reassurance and confirm the continuing commitment of the international community to assist Croatia in implementing its comprehensive programme of national reconciliation.

This new civilian police mission will work with the OSCE mission in Croatia to promote the return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes, and to promote the goal of full reintegration. Although there was initial scepticism about the prospects for the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia into Croatia, the dedication, drive and diplomatic skill demonstrated by the leadership and personnel of this United Nations effort helped ensure that the parties met obligations under the Basic Agreement and made UNTAES a model for United Nations peacekeeping.

However, a large measure of the success of UNTAES also belongs to the leadership of the Government of Croatia, which has taken difficult steps to follow the path of national reconciliation. We strongly support the Croatian Government in this regard and look forward to its continuing commitment to peace and reconciliation, both within the region and throughout Croatia, in the coming months.

More than four years of war and conflict in the region have inflicted wounds that can fully heal only with time. UNTAES, working with the Government of Croatia, has helped to lay a foundation for healing and rebuilding. Now we must test that foundation as we move towards economic reconstruction and revitalization. All the commitments, pledges and promises made on both sides — by the Government and by the local Serb population — must be made good.

I would like to express our appreciation to all the countries which have contributed military and civilian personnel, police observers, staff and financial and material support to UNTAES. In particular, we note the outstanding leadership of the UNTAES Transitional Administrators, Jacques Paul Klein and William Walker, and of the Force Commanders, Major-General Jozef Schoups and Major-General William Hanset.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1997/990.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Chile, China, Costa Rica, Egypt, France, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Kenya, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1145 (1997).

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.